

Dear Legislators,

I am the Chair of the Creative Writing Department at the ACES Educational Center for the Arts (ECA) and I am writing to you to urge your support of bill H6666, Sec. 5, which would allow the extraordinary practitioner-teachers who comprise my part-time program's core faculty to continue teaching. They would not be able to become certified even under the Alternative Route to Certification program, and without their teaching—which forms the bedrock of an ECA education—our school, with a 35-year-track record of extraordinary success lauded throughout the country--would close.

Our part-time high school only offers 6-10 hour-per-week jobs with no benefits to the professional artists we employ as practitioner teachers. Our pay scale makes the positions almost voluntary. It simply would make no sense for any of these professional artists to undertake the expensive and time-consuming process of certification, as the Commissioner is asking them to do by 2014, for such little financial recompense, especially when they also pursuing their professional lives *and* teaching concurrently at the college level to keep body and soul together *while* teaching at ECA.

I am attaching a copy of an article published last summer in the **New Haven Independent**, which demonstrates precisely what these highly-trained professionals (the Creative Writing faculty have published books, had their films produced, plays performed in New York, and won countless prizes; they all teach concurrently at the college level, including at Yale and Sarah Lawrence) deliver to the students of Connecticut from 19 school districts. Please pay special attention to the comments by the student whose first screenplay was filmed by his ECA screenwriting teacher, and to the comments of his delighted father.

Our students receive their academic work in the morning at their home schools, and come to ECA in the afternoons for the career-preparation that is an essential part of their schooling as high-school students. We are not trying to supplant certified teachers and their jobs—we are arguing for a work-around that would allow for the continued existence of a program that is unique and **works**. Our alumni are now populating the film and entertainment industry, serving as professors in universities, founding non-profits that support single-parents in raising their kids—they are contributing highly, in other words, in countless ways to our society—in the course of finding careers that afford them both sustenance and joy.

Sample alumni:

Graduates of the Creative Writing Department

Jonah Quickmire Pettigrew became the cinematographer and editor for the HBO documentary *Andrew Jenks, Room 335* almost immediately upon graduating from ECA. He is the founder of Kids Making Movies, a summer film camp for children in his hometown of New Haven, Connecticut.

Janna Wagner, is the founder and Program Director of All our Kin, a non-profit organization which provides education and assistance to single parents. She was named one of greater New Haven's "Forty Under 40" by Business Times, and a "Rising Star" by Business New Haven.

Lara Bovilsky is an Assistant Professor of English in the Honors College of the University of Oregon.

Alumni from other ECA departments include:

LAUREN AMBROSE, nominated twice for a Best Actress Emmy Award for her role in the HBO's critically acclaimed *Six-Foot Under*, also has starred in plays on Broadway and in Shakespeare in the Park, to great critical acclaim; JON BRION, composer for Academy Award-winning and -nominated films, and producer of multi-platinum, Grammy-winning albums; RAY SULLIVAN, in the cast of CATS on Broadway for many years, and member of the National Dance Company of Argentina; RYAN KELLY, now a member of the cast of Broadway's WICKED, PATRICIA McGUIRE DUNNOCK, graduate of the ECA Theatre Department, has performed on television and on Broadway, and has produced films that are now being shown on the Independent Film Channel.

Please don't allow certification requirements to drive away a faculty responsible for such outcomes for Connecticut's students. Our doors will close, and Connecticut's students will suffer immeasurably because of a technicality.

Sincerely yours,
Caroline Rosenstone
ACES ECA Department Chair,
Creative Writing Department